

Gypsy 'king' Richard buys up more green

£54,000 land grab by traveller

By JON AUSTIN
Political reporter

THE main spokesman for hundreds of travellers illegally camped at Crays Hill has forked out £54,000 for more green belt land.

Residents fear Richard Sheridan and three others from the Dale Farm site, are planning a new illegal camp off London Road.

Yesterday the Echo revealed the 35-year-old had become a top travellers' campaigner, fighting to keep travellers on Dale Farm and advising the Government.

However, residents believe the half-an-acre purchase, which could house as many as 40 travellers, is a bid to cash in on more development or, worse still, build new homes.

Mr Sheridan today confirmed the purchase – but said it was to graze horses.



Buyer – Richard Sheridan

David McPherson-Davis, Ramsden Crays Parish Council chairman, said the travellers would have paid "dearly" for such land.

He said: "I am surprised these people have any spare cash left to buy land bearing in mind most people at the site appear to be on income support.

Basildon Council has secured a High Court injunction banning Mr

Sheridan, Michael Slattery, Patrick Sheridan and Jeremy O'Brien from developing a "residential encampment" on the land.

The men gave an address in Queensway, London.

The court application stated: "Their surnames are synonymous with those of prominent traveller families presently occupying Dale Farm. Richard Sheridan is an exact match to the name of the person who tends to be the spokesperson.

"I believe the purchase is a form of land banking in the event direct action is taken by the council."

Businessman Len Gridley from Oak Road said: "This shows he is not just campaigning, he is feathering his own nest, sticking two fingers up at the village."

Campaigner Kim Gandy added: "I'd like to know where the cash comes from. We are told all the money

went into buying and they live hut most people afford this."

Council leader Buckley added: "We will continue to use the land available to provide green belt."

The site, near Basildon, made headlines when land agent Property Spy split it into two for sale. Village residents paid £320,000 to buy the site, but the sale

A spokesman for Property Spy, who always maintains that the land will not sell to illegal travellers, said: "We were not aware of the address for the site, but the site had no indication that it was for travellers. We were aware that it was for private investors."